

Hatchie

National Wildlife Refuge

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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1964.
- Acres: 11,556.
- Located entirely within Haywood County, TN.
- Other management:
Conservation Easement: one in Hardeman County, TN totaling 359.93 acres in two tracts.
- Location: one mile south of Brownsville, TN on the south bank of 23.5 miles of the state—designated Hatchie Scenic River. Bisected by I-40 and TN Highway 76 about 50 miles east of Memphis and 130 miles west of Nashville, TN.

Natural History

- About 90 percent of the Refuge lies within the floodplain of the Hatchie River. The Hatchie is the last unchannelized river of its type in the Lower Mississippi River Valley and still functions under near normal wetland cycles. About 9,400 acres of bottomland hardwoods are located on the refuge and are flooded by headwater flows of the Hatchie.
- The headwaters of the Hatchie in Mississippi are channelized as are 33 major tributaries.
- Alterations are causing drastic changes in flooding patterns and deposition of inordinate amounts of silt and sand in refuge timberlands. Wind deposited soils on the surrounding highlands with intensive farming practices (cotton) combine causing erosion rates to soar to as high as 120 tons/acre/year. Current timber losses amount to about 100 acres per year.
- Concentrations of ducks (primarily mallards), shorebirds and wading birds.

- Open water 270 acres, wetland 10,000 acres, woodlands 9,800 acres, cropland 1,000 acres, and grasslands 31 acres.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Five-person staff.
- 35,000 visitors annually (with opening of wildlife drive, accessible 365 days/year; this year visitation will increase substantially).
- Current budget (FY 98) \$336,700.
- Resident and non-resident visitors generated an estimated \$350,000 last year.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide forested habitat for migratory waterfowl and other birds.
- Provide nesting habitat for wood ducks and hooded mergansers.
- Provide recreation and environmental education for the public.
- Maintain representative flora and fauna characteristic of bottomland hardwood forests of Western Tennessee.

Management Tools

- Water management for migratory waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds and other birds.
- Cooperative farming.
- Prescribed fire.
- Mechanical / chemical control of noxious plants.
- Deer management with public hunting.
- Education / interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

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Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation.
- Hunting, including youth hunts.
- Fishing, including a prototype accessible fishing project.
- Photography.
- Boating access to the Hatchie River.
- Auto tour route (to open in 1998).

Calendar of Events

March: refuge birthday celebration.

April: fishing tournament for disabled anglers, spring turkey hunting.

June: Jr. / Sr. Fishing Rodeo.

September-February: small game hunting.

September-October: archery deer hunting.

October: gun deer hunting, National Wildlife Refuge Week Celebration.

November-January: waterfowl hunting.

Questions and Answers

Are the roads open/dry?

Roads are frequently flooded. Whistling Wings Wildlife Drive will open this year. This auto tour route was built out of the floodplain to accommodate use year round regardless of flooding conditions elsewhere on the refuge. It is also designed to replicate wetland habitats found in the Hatchie flood plain. These wetland habitats will have interpretive signs and other materials allowing visitors to see and better understand Hatchie riverine habitats and the associated wildlife.

Is hunting season open?

A new telephone system has been installed which will allow callers to leave a message. The recording explains upcoming events, and the caller can leave their name and address to receive refuge leaflets.

Is Oneal Lake open to fishing?

Oneal Lake is the centerpiece of the Whistling Wings Wildlife Drive. Fishing is limited to special events to allow the least disturbance to wildlife using the lake; thereby enhancing opportunities for wildlife viewing from the drive.

Currently there are two special events: Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge Jr. / Sr. Fishing Rodeo scheduled for National Fishing Day each year and the Bass Bonanza, a tournament for disabled anglers, scheduled this year for April 25.

Why are McCool and Borrow Pit Lake Roads closed?

These roads have been closed for 6-8 years. Both roads lead from Highway 76, which is east of I-40, to lakes west of I-40. The roads are routed underneath I-40 at two different bridge locations. Floodwaters from the Hatchie, stretching for over a mile, move against the causeway for Highway 76, but find passage only at several bridge locations.

Why aren't the roads graded and graveled regularly?

Velocity of flood flows at these locations increases due to the constriction causing rapid deterioration of the roads. For several years there was nothing the refuge could do on the I-40 right-of way as the support structures for I-40 bridges could be damaged. During a recent Tennessee Department of Transportation contract to repair these I-40 bridges, the manager worked closely with state officials and the contractor to effect permanent repair of these roads. Now, these roads require raising and graveling which are scheduled for completion in 1998. Both roads should be open during 1998 if storm damage funds are approved and allocated.